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ED 012 194 RC 000 683

SPANISH-AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN THE 1960'S.

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PUB DATE AUG 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.72 18P.

DESCRIPTORS- SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED, SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION, LANGUAGE, *EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED, ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED, *CULTURAL DISADVANTAGEMENT, *BILINGUALISM, *INSTRUCTION, AMERICAN INDIANS, SPANISH CULTURE, *SPANISH AMERICANS, MEXICAN AMERICANS, SPANISH, ENGLISH, SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES, LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO, SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

IN THIS SPEECH TO THE TEACHERS OF LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO, THE AUTHOR REFERS TO THE RICH SPANISH, MEXICAN, AND INDIAN CULTURES AVAILABLE FOR SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO AND SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES. HE BELIEVES THE PLIGHT OF THE INDIANS AND THE SPANISH AMERICAN PEOPLE IS DUE TO DEPRIVATION FROM POLITICAL OFFICE, SOCIOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT, ECONOMIC SECURITY, EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS, AND FROM LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS IN THEIR OWN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS. THIS DEPRIVATION RESULTS FROM THE ANGLO-AMERICAN CONTROL AND INFLUENCE IN SCHOOL AND GOVERNMENT. TO PROMOTE THE SPANISH AMERICAN CAUSE, THE AUTHOR PROPOSES A PLAN WHICH IS--(1) TO EVALUATE THE SPANISH AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ROLES IN THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTHWEST, (2) TO MAKE THE SPANISH AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ENTIRE NATION AWARE OF THEIR TRAGIC EXPERIENCES, (3) TO AROUSE THE FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS SO THAT THE CONDITIONS OF POVERTY, DISCRIMINATION, AND APATHY MAY BE OVERCOME, AND (4) TO INSTRUCT THE BILINGUAL MEXICAN AMERICAN AND SPANISH AMERICAN STUDENTS IN BOTH SPANISH AND ENGLISH. DR. KNOWLTON CONCLUDES BY SAYING THAT THE RESULTANT BETTER EDUCATION WILL ENABLE THESE PEOPLE TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN ASSUMING THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY. THIS SPEECH WAS PREPARED FOR THE 1966 TEACHER ORIENTATION (WEST LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO CITY SCHOOLS, AUGUST 31, 1966). (JH)

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SPANISH-AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN THE 1960's

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Prepared for the 1966 Teacher Orientation at
West Las Vegas, New Mexico City Schools
August 31, 1966

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My fellow teachers: I appreciate the kind invitation of Superintendent Ray Leger to speak to you today. It is always a personal pleasure for me to return to Las Vegas and to visit old friends. No matter where I may work, New Mexico and San Miguel County will always occupy a special place in my heart. I can never forget the strenous and somewhat fascinating five years that I lived here. I came to New Mexico Highlands University in 1958 because I wanted to live in New Mexico and to engage in research among the Spanish-American people. During my graduate work, I had heard many comments about the Spanish American rural villages as one of the few examples of a sucessful rural village settlement pattern in the United States. Other professors mentioned that New Mexico was an excellent place to study the impact of Anglo-American culture upon a culture derived from Spain and from Mexico. Others emphasized that northern New Mexico with Indians, Anglo-Americans, and Spanish-Americans was a natural social laboratory for the study of culture contacts. And a few stated that conditions of poverty in northern New Mexico resembled those of Latin America rather than in the rest of the United States. They felt that it might be an excellent place to study sociology of poverty.

At the time of my coming to New Mexico, I was an ivory tower sociologist. I had lived many years in Latin America and was interested in the phenomena of race and culture contacts. Upon arrival in San Miguel County, I began to visit every village in the county. The stories that I heard from my students and from the older inhabitants of the villages about land robbery, theft of water rights, and their tragic experiences under Anglo-American occupation aroused my curiosity. I decided that I should read everything that I could find about the history, the culture, and the social and economic systems of New Mexico and of the Spanish Americans. I checked what I read with the people of the area. I also traveled around the state talking with social scientists, politicians, and government employees.

Gradually my ivory tower philogophy left me. I was possessed with an enormous indignation at what I learned and saw. I became aware that there are really three histories of the Southwest. There is the Anglo-American history that is taught in the public schools that portray the movement of the Anglo-Americans into the Southwest as the advance of civilization. This history is what I now call the Anglo-American party line. It ignores almost totally the enormous cultural, political, social, and economic achievements of the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest. Without this foundation, the Anglo settlement of the Southwest would have been far more difficult than it was.

There is also the Indian history of the Southwest handed down from father to son. It is a sad and tragic history of aggression, violence, and death. I would like to mention that there are around 15 Indian groupings in the Southwest who have managed to preserve their cultures, their languages, and their tribal integrity. At the present time Indian tribes over the nation are beginning to recover from the cultural shock of military conquest, cultural aggression, and loss of independence. Many of them are beginning to demand the right to control their own affaris. An Indian revival in some tribes such as the Iroquois is beginning to take place with an awakening interest in the Indian cultural heritage. The Indians are not vanishing Americans. With one of the highest rates of population increase in the nation, they are increasing very rapidly. Here in New Mexico the Indians through block voting can control close state elections. Unfortunately, there is a tendency among Anglo politicians to play the Indians off against the Spanish-Americans. If I were a young Spanish-American with political ambitions, I would cultivate the acquaintance of young Indian leaders. An alliance between the Indians and the Spanish-Americans could effectively control the destinies of New Mexico.

The Spanish-Americans also have their distinctive history of the Southwest. Like the Indian version, it is passed down from one generation to another in stories of Anglo aggression and violance, discrimination, and land loss. It also exists in the folk music of the region. Unfortunately neither the Indians nor the Spanish-Americans have yet developed a generation of writers, historians, novelists, poets, essayists, and musicians to vividly portray the experiences of the Indians and Spanish-Americans under Anglo conquest. There is not in contrast to the Negroes a single Spanish-American scholarly or popular journal devoted to the recovery of Spanish-American history and culture or to relating to the nations the unfortunate experiences of the Spanish American under Anglo American control. This is one of the reasons why the Spanish Americans have been called a silent minority ignored by public and private agencies.

The creation of a group of Spanish-American intellectuals directly concerned with an evaluation of Spanish-American history and culture and its role in the life and future of the Southwest is an absolute must before much of cultural or an economic renaissance can take place in northern New Mexico. There is, thus, a desperate need for genuine, creative, rebellious, and protesting Spanish-American voicesto explain Spanish-American history, aspirations, hopes, fears, and their tragic experiences under Anglo-American control to Spanish-American people and the entire nation. Only through reaching the intellectual and educated groupings in the United States is there any hope that the national conscience or the federal government can be aroused to assist the Spanish-Americans overcome the present conditions of poverty, discrimination, and apathy.

There have been and are a few writers and intellectuals of Spanish-American origin. For the most part they have been far more concerned about their acceptance by the Anglo community than by their role among the Spanish-American

people. Like many of the early Negro writers, they have turned their backs upon their own people. The very few Spanish-American or Anglo scholars and writers who protested and wrote upon the poverty and exploitation of the Spanish-Americans were often forced to leave New Mexico. It was not until the Negro intellectuals and writers and their Anglo sympathizers founded scholarly and popular Negro journals and magazines as voices for an entire Negro generation that the Negroes were able to reach the intellectual establishment in the United States. One good novel, one good protest folk song, one well written scholarly history presenting the Spanish-American history, one series of paintings by an authentic Spanish-American artist, one well edited magazine, or journal, or the founding of just one small printing press devoted to the cultivation of Spanish-American literature and art is worth more than all the money that has been poured into New Mexico by federal and state agencies.

Before there can be an economic renaissance among the Spanish-Americans, there must be a cultural revival. The Spanish-American people must recover their own history. They need to know that they have a historical and cultural background of achievement that is worthy of respect and admiration.

The Spanish-Americans have been cut off from their own history and culture by the public school systems. The schools saturated with middle class Anglo-American values that ignore the contributions to American history by non-Anglo groups have chloroformed the Spanish-American culture. Spanish-American students coming out of the public schools know nothing of the cultural and historical achievements of their ancestors. They are completely ignorant of the cultural developments of Spain, Portugal, and of Latin America. As a result they are filled with feelings of inferiority and suffer from self-hatred. They tend to look down upon their own families and their own people. Staggering blindly toward an ill conceived anglicization, they are manfitted to live

either among their own people or among the Anglo-Americans. Until the Spanish-Americans of northern New Mexico can regain their self-respect and their self-confidence, a knowledge of their own cultural and historical achievements and the resultant self-pride, there is little hope for them or for northern New Mexico.

You as Spanish-American school teachers have special responsibility before your own people. You are virtually the only intellectual group found in the rural villages and small towns. You still have intimate contact with your own people. You are the ones who mold the coming generations of Spanish-American students. You are now at a crossroad. You can follow the road taken by several generations of Irish and Polish school teachers who under the threat of death and imprisonment kept alive Irish and Polish culture and handed it down to future generations. You can also follow the Welsh, the Flemish, and the French Canadian school teachers who created a cultural rennaissance that led to the recovery of self-respect and pride by submerged minority groups that ultimately laid the basis for a full cultural and economic renaissance. Or you can play it safe and follow the secure path of conformity, timidity, and sterility. You can continue to eat at the tables of the Anglo establishment of New Mexico. If you do this, you will protect your own job but you will be swept aside by the course of events. You will have little influence on the future of New Mexico. You will watch the coming of new leaders whom you have not influenced from the slums, the migrant labor camps, and the rural villages. Your talents and your capabilities will be wasted. No one will ever remember you, and the status and role of a teacher will decline among the Spanish Americans. You will have neither the respect of the Anglo nor of your own people. Your own conscience will reproach you, and many of your own students will someday condemn you.

You owe it to your relatives, to your ancestors, and to your students to make them familiar with Spanish-American history and culture. You must work to develop in them a sense of pride in their origin and in the achievements of their ancestors. Send them out into the streets of the cities and into the rural villages to study the characteristics and causes of poverty and economic decline in northern New Mexico. Awaken in them both a flaming resentment against past mistreatment and a firm determination to become the leaders so desperately needed by the Spanish-American people. Make them acquainted with Spanish-American art, music, and architecture. Have them read the writings of the great creative minds in Spain, Portugal, and in Latin America. This too is part of their heritage. Make them familiar with the advantages of bilingualism and let them explore the great treasures of the Spanish language. Have your students study the civil rights and social movements among the Negro, the Indian, and other groups in the United States. If you cannot do this in the framework of the public school system then organize your own free private schools, as other groups are doing in the United States. Do this and you will go down in honor and respect. You too can mold and create a proud free people, a worthy component of the many diverse racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

I want you to remember that the net result of the last fifty years of Anglo-American dominance in Northern New Mexico has been the creation of a distressed area in northern New Mexico marked by extreme conditions of poverty, unemployment,apathy, powerlessness, and culture conflict. The Spanish-Americans caught like flies in the land hungry web of the Anglo-American political, economic, and social system have been stripped of most of their land and water and left to vegetate in poverty.

In 1930 the Spanish-Americans were in a definite numerical majority in New Mexico. Today they compose around 38% of the state population. They are continuing to lose ground economically, socially, politically and culturally in the state. Unless the Spanish-American people are able to secure adequate political, educational, economic, and social leadership, they will continue to decline. The old patrons are dying. The once wealthy politically powerful Spanish-American patron families that played such important roles in the state in the past have lost their economic and political position. The majority of the existing jefe politicos are dependent upon Anglo American political machines. It is not that they are politically corrupt that is so sad but that they sell out for so little for themselves or for their people.

Unfortunately, the Spanish-Americans have never been able to arouse the attention of the federal or the state governments in their problems. Governors come and governors go. The problems of southern and eastern New Mexico receive considerable state attention, but northern New Mexico continues to decline. Thousands of dollars have been spent in northern New Mexico by federal agencies in the development of programs to assist northern New Mexico. Most of these programs have failed because of inadequate cultural, social, and linguistic communication between agency heads and Spanish-American masses. The liberal circles in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Los Alamos are gravely concerned about the plight of the Negro in the southern states and northern slums. They contribute large sums of money and some of their children of college age go off to join the civil right marches. But when they are reminded of the existence of the conditions of poverty, exploitation, and discrimination affecting the Spanish-Americans in New Mexico, they become confused and silent. Many of them murmur that the Spanish Americans are responsible for their own problems and that the Negroes are more chique and socially fashionable in liberal circles.

The Spanish-Americans can expect very little assistance from the present political and economic Anglo establishment of New Mexico. Until they draw national public attention to themselves through protest organizations and demonstrations, they can expect little help from the federal government. The Anglo liberal elements in the state will continue to ignore them. In other words, no one will come to the assistance of the Spanish-Americans until they get up off the ground, cease being a sleeping giant, and "agitar, organizar, y luchar." Then and only then will allies come to help you. You have to develop the organizations, find the leadership, and start the ball. If you do this you, like the Negro, will become astonished at the reservoirs of good-will you will tap in the American schools and universities, the number of students who will come to assist you, and the national attention that you will receive from the mass media. But nothing will happen until you are willing to start.

You cannot rely on the traditional Spanish-American political and professional leadership elements for the moment. The Spanish-Americans have sent many senators and congressmen to Washington, D.C. What have they gained from their political activities? They are laughed at in Santa Fe and in Washington, D.C. Where are all the government installations in the State? Where are all the major irrigation projects? Are any of them in northern New Mexico? Do you know of any coming to northern New Mexico? Northern New Mexico is still a political and economic orphan betrayed by her children and ignored by the rest. Hungry and naked it stands in the cold gazing through the windows of government agencies in Washington and in Santa Fe watching the rich banquets spread for the rest of the state. You have to find a new leadership free of chains.

But quietly and silently the situation is beginning to change. Unrest is spreading like a silent flood through the villages, the migrant labor camps, and the urban slums. The first heat lightening of protest is just beginning to

play over the New Mexican mountains. The first cumulous floods of social unrest are riding high through the blue New Mexican skies. No more than perhaps ten years of social peace and tranquility remain in the Southwest. If the Anglo establishment of New Mexico and the Federal government make a concerted effort to resolve the economic and cultural problems of northern New Mexico, the clouds will shed refreshing rain and then pass on. If they do not, the sky will darken and thunder and lightening will mark a major assault on the status quo. Each one of you had better examine your own conscience and ask where you will be when the storm breaks. What role will you play?

Now I want to specifically discuss educational problems in the Southwest. Since the American occupation of the Southwest, controversy has raged over the attitude of state and local school systems toward the Spanish language and the Spanish-American culture. The philosophy of the state and local school systems is imbued with the traditional middle class Anglo-American value that all minority and immigrant groups should be required to abandon their native languages and cultures, give up their group identity, and become absorbed as individuals into the dominant group, usually on a lower class level. If any group resists full acculturation it is regarded as somewhat uncivilized, un-American, and potentially subversive. There is a complete unwillingness to accept the idea that a native-born American who happens to want to speak Spanish, German, or Polish and to retain many of the values of his native culture might well be a loyal American. As a result, the full force of the educational system in the Southwest has been directed toward the eradication of both the Spanish language and the Spanish-American or Mexican-American cultures.

The results have been very serious. The Spanish-speaking child required to attend school taught in a strange and alien language passes through a period of emotional and intellectual confusion that may handicap him for life. The average Spanish-speaking child loses from three to four years in struggling to acquire enough academic English to do school work. Large numbers give up the struggle and drop out as soon as they can. The rest tend

to fall behind the Anglo-American child for three to five years.

As the Spanish-speaking child has seldom mastered the basic grammatical concepts of the Spanish language before he is forced to deal with English, he seldom learns either Spanish or English well. The school districts of the Southwest have the unique honor of graduating students who are functionally illiterate in two languages. The ability of these students to find adequate employment or to go on to college is gravely handicapped by their linguistic confusion.

This is a condition that exists because of a prejudiced, irrational, and extremely parochial educational philosophy. Many nations throughout the world have bilingual populations. At first most of them utilized the national language as the sole language of instruction for linguistic minority groups. After a long process of confusion and educational failure, such countries as England, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Russia, Mexico, and Canada have started to educate all children in the language of their home at least in the elementary grades. They have found that by doing this the educational progress of the minority group children is accelerated. Such children are also free of the harmful emotional complications that are a byproduct of the older system of using the national language exclusively in the teaching of minority children.

Bilingualism in the Southwest has been used as a convenient whipping boy or scapeboat upon which all of the educational deficiencies of the Spanish-speaking children can be conveniently blamed. It then becomes easy to hide the fact that no equality of educaticnal opportunities exist in New Mexico or in Texas. As the majority of Spanish-speaking children live in urban slums or in rural villages, it is convenient to point to bilingualism as the factor responsible for their educational deficiences. One can then forget that in these areas the school buildings are poor, antiquated, or

simply inadequate. Because of the lower taxing power of poverty areas, local teacher salaries are inadequate, the schools are sadly lacking in equipment, and only the basic core curriculum can be taught. A Spanish-speaking child in Mora, Penasco, or in la Union or Anthony does not have the same educational opportunity as an Anglo child in Albuquerque, Carlsbad, or Roswell. Unfortunately, these larger urban centers do not realize that the products of the poorer slum and rural village schools will migrate to them in search of employment. As they are not adequately prepared, they create serious economic and social problems that to a large degree could be averted if all children in the state were given equal educational opportunities.

In the United States scattered school districts in Florida, New York, and in Laredo, Texas, are abandoning the older system of using English exclusively and are now teaching in both Spanish and in English. One school district near Miami, for example, is teaching all courses in Spanish in the morning and in English in the afternoon. In New York, Puerto Rican children are learning much faster than before. As a result of the new experiments in the use of Spanish, the state of Colorado has now set the example by repealing its law that English must be the only language of instruction. It is time that New Mexico and Texas followed this example. In both New Mexico and in Texas, state laws will permit the experimental use of Spanish as a teaching language.

Using Spanish as the basic language of instruction in the elementary grades does not presuppose the abandonment of English. Every citizen must acquire a functioning knowledge of English in order to participate fully in our national life. Unfortunately the methods now used to teach English to

non-English speaking children in the majority of our school systems are completely out of date. The average English teacher teaches English to Spanish-speaking children the same way that she does to native English-speaking children. The result is that few Spanish-speaking children acquire an effective command of the English language. This method is completely contrary to all the basic principles of linguistics. Teachers should be specially trained in the new methods recently worked out for the teaching of English to non-English speaking children and by the adoption of all the modern developments in electronic equipment and language laboratories. These methods are now being used in military establishments and in universities and colleges throughout America. Unfortunately, they have not yet been adopted on a large scale by elementary and secondary schools.

The basic goal of schools in the Spanish-speaking areas of the Southwest should be to produce students who can effectively speak, read, and write both Spanish and English, and to comprehend both Spanish and Anglo cultural values. To achieve this, both English and Spanish should be used as basic teaching languages. Many recent experiments have shown that children who master their native languages well can more efficiently learn another language than can children who have not completely learned their native languages. Recent tests in Canada show that children who are bilingual when matched with mono-lingual children of the same socio-economic backgrounds learn faster, progress at a more accelerated rate, and are more intellectually mature.

Furthermore, a school district that effectively prepared its students in both Spanish and English would be helping to fill an important national need. As the United States is engaged in a prolonged struggle for survival against

the Communists, it must compete for the hearts and souls of men all over the world. One of the most serious and notorious American weakness is that there are so very few Americans who speak more than one language or who have a real knowledge of the cultural values of other parts of the world. Americans are seriously handicapped by their cultural and linguistic isolation.

Therefore, a minority group in the United States such as the Spanish-Americans and Mexican-Americans who possess a language and a culture shared by millions outside the United States should be treated as a national resource of great importance. The schools should encourage and support the existence of minority cultures and languages. Thus, the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest could become an effective bridge of communication between Latin America and Anglo America. The need is so great for bi-lingual college graduates, that such a person has a definite competitive advantage over the mono-lingual individual.

Now to return to the emotional problems of the Spanish-speaking child fighting blindly for survival in an English-speaking school system. As Spanish is not used in the school, and as he is often punished for speaking Spanish during school hours, the Spanish-speaking school child comes to regard it as an inferior language to English. He also feels that he is inferior to English-speaking children and that his family and his culture are inferior to theirs. This deeply rooted feeling of inferiority may often paralyze his intellectual and cultural potentialities. It weakens his ability to compete with the English-speaking person. Also many Spanish-speaking children develop considerable self-hatred developed against themselves and against their families and their minority group and its culture. This is a tragic price to pay for an ideological regidity that forbides the use of Spanish in the classroom.

Furthermore there is little in the mass of reading materials, textbooks, or instructional material that has any meaning at all to the life of a poverty stricken Spanish-speaking child. The material portrays a middle class Anglo suburban world of which he is completely ignorant. The great cultural contributions of the Spanish and of the Mexicans to the cultural development of the Southwest tend to be ignored. The child cut off from his own cultural roots comes to believe that his people have contributed little of any value to human civilization.

The Spanish-speaking child is also in almost complete ignorance about the important cultural, economic, and social progress taking place south of the Rio Grande. He is unaware that Latin American novelists, essayists, and poets are translated into all of the major languages of the world and that they rate very highly in the modern literary world. He knows nothing about the great artistic traditions of Mexico, Brazil, or Argentina. He is in ignorance of the fact that Latin American scientists, engineers, and statesmen are commanding a world reputation. The tortilla curtain along the Rio Grande cuts him off as it does the Anglo child from all contact with the dynamic, rapidly growing cultures of the Latin American countries on the other side of the Rio Grande.

In closing, I would like to paint two contrasting pictures of the Southwest. One is a Southwest that has been completely anglicized. The Spanish-speaking and Indian groupings have been completely absorbed. The entire population is standardized and homogenized. It is no better or no worse than the state of Kansas, Oklahoma, or Nebraska. It has become an intellectual and cultural backwater, a parochial isolated stagnant back-

water because it is so far from the cultural centers of Anglo American culture.

The other picture is that of a Southwest in which the full flowering of Anglo American, Spanish American, Mexican American, and Indian cultures and languages has been encouraged. It has become a cultural and linguistically plural region. The cross fertilization of cultures may well create a regional culture that is richer in art, literature, education, culture, and perhaps even in science than any of the neighboring regions of the United States. The Southwest could develop a cosmopolitan culture open to all the cultural currents that flow from both Anglo American and Latin America. It could be a region where the two great cultural centers meet and blend in a creative synthesis.

In closing, I again want to express my appreciation to Superintendent Leger for the opportunity of being with you here today. I hope to see all of you again. If I may be of any assistance to you, or if you want to argue, to criticize my ideas, or to start a dialogue please call on me. I wish you the very best of luck during the recent school year.